

Wisconsin Color Guard Takes 3rd Place in National Competition

Written by Capt. Jeri Gonwa

Sunday, 03 July 2011

For the first time in the history of Civil Air Patrol (CAP), a Wisconsin Wing Color Guard has placed in the top three teams in the nation. The Fox Cities Composite Squadron Color Guard team located in Appleton, Wisc., competed in the 2011 National Cadet Competition held June 23-26 at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, placing third overall in the nation.

Each of CAP's eight regions was represented by a four-person color guard and a 13-person drill team. Competing among one hundred fifty-two highly-skilled CAP cadets from across America, including Puerto Rico, the team also won first place overall in the Color Guard category for the Mile Run and Outdoor Practical Drill and placed second in Standard Drill.

The team represented the Great Lakes Region as well as Wisconsin at the prestigious inspection and drill event that spans seven decades. Though Drill Teams have always been a part of the competition, it was not until the past 20 years that Color Guards were allowed to compete.



Members of the Wisconsin Color Guard team were:

Cadet Technical Sergeant Michael Lang, Color Guard commander, Neenah, Wisc.

Cadet Senior Master Sergeant David Ama, Green Bay, Wisc.

Cadet Master Sergeant Jacob Reuter, Menasha, Wisc.

Cadet Master Sergeant Evan Thomsen, Hortonville, Wisc.

Cadet Master Sergeant Alex Roberts, alternate, Green Bay, Wisc.

Team escorts included Majors Jacqueline Miller, Nina Schmitt and Terrance Schmitt.

The youth demonstrated their skills in events that involved precision and teamwork, including standard drill movements, indoor and outdoor posting of the American flag and knowledge of aerospace and leadership related topics, including a written exam and panel quiz, as well as physical fitness challenge involving a mile run. Prizes were awarded for individual scores as well as overall awards in each category.

"The Color Guard team motto of 'Happy teams don't need trophies.' served the team well at the

Wing, Region, and National competitions" stated Colonel Clarence Peters, the Wisconsin Wing commander. "The motto emphasized the Wisconsin Wing tradition of cooperation, hard work, perseverance, and dedication." He went on "The team did these things well, and the awards did come at the Wing, Region, and National levels."



For months, the team worked hard to achieve this honor. Their dedication to the flag and country is what drove these young men to learn how to properly honor their country's symbol of freedom. Major Nina Schmitt, the team's lead escort, the team was there for the positive experience and to learn from the competition. "They are just here for the experience, not the trophy," stated Schmitt. She was proud of what the Color Guard accomplished however and thrilled with the final results.

"Four or so years ago, our team was just barely beginning to understand what (being on the) color guard meant. Over these years, the color guard has taught me to be a better leader, strengthened my knowledge, and made me the person I am today" stated Cadet Senior Master Sergeant David Ama. "Now as I leave for active duty with the Navy I know that my team will always strive for excellence and shoot for the stars."

Was all the time and effort that was put into learning the knowledge portion of the competition worth it? According to Cadet Technical Sergeant Michael Lang, commander of the Color Guard, "...it has been the best three years of my life." He explains that "If you have a love for your country and the flag you will love color guard. I would very highly suggest that everybody participate in color guard as it works on teamwork and other life skills."

The three other team members could not agree more. Cadet Master Sergeant Jacob Reuter commented that being on the color guard "was one of the best choices I have made. It improved my knowledge, made me a better non-commissioned officer (NCO), and reinforced brotherhood with the other team members."

Cadet Master Sergeant Evan Thomsen concurred with his teammates stating "Color Guard was one of the most honorable choices I have ever made." He continued, "It was a great experience that I will never forget."

"Every single person who plans to lead somehow in their life should do color guard," stated

Cadet Master Sergeant Alex Roberts when asked if he would recommend participating on a Color Guard. "Whether you are a new cadet or a 5 year veteran it is the most helpful opportunity available."



Roberts went on to explain how being on the team has helped him grow as an individual. "Due to three years of (training on the) color guard I have become much more opened minded, less shy, and very good at drill, and I have found a second family," referring to the three senior member escorts as well as his teammates.

The Wisconsin Color Guard and Ohio Drill Teams represented not only their respective states, but won the Great Lakes Region Competition, giving them the right to move on to the national competition.

Colonel Robert Karton, Great Lakes Region commander, had this to say about the teams who represented the region. "I am very proud of the accomplishments of both the Wisconsin Wing (WIWG) Color Guard and the Ohio Wing (OHWG) Drill Team. They are superb representatives of the cadets of the GLR." He went on to say, "On behalf of the entire region, I am grateful to their parents, their escorts and the officers and leadership of the WIWG and OHWG without whom none of this would have been possible."

The cadets know that they could not have achieved this momentous award if it were not for the support of their family, unit, and senior escorts who poured hours into their training. They are thankful for the twelve supporters who made the journey to Ohio and cheered them on at National Competition. It is now time for a short break; but come fall, they will be back practicing once again.

The Fox Cities Composite Squadron Color Guard will be presenting the colors at the August 13 Milwaukee Brewer's game, along with other Color Guards from throughout the state.

Top Left Photo taken by Capt. Jeri Gonwa - Left to Right - Cadet Master Sergeant Jacob Reuter; Cadet Technical Sergeant Michael Lang, Color Guard commander; Cadet Senior Master Sergeant David Ama; Cadet Master Sergeant Evan Thomsen; Colonel Cooper.

Right Photo taken by Tom Roberts: Left to right - Major Terrance Schmitt, team escort; Cadet Master Sergeant Jacob Reuter; Major Jacqueline Miller, team escort; Cadet Technical Sergeant Michael Lang, Color Guard commander; Major Robert Koehler, Fox Cities Composite Squadron commander; Cadet Senior Master Sergeant

David Ama; Cadet Master Sergeant Evan Thomsen; Major Nina Schmitt, Lead Team Escort; Cadet Master Sergeant Alex Roberts, alternate.

Bottom Left Photo taken by Capt. Jeri Gonwa: Left to Right - Cadets Master Sergeant Evan Thomsen and Jacob Reuter; Cadet Technical Sergeant Michael Lang, Color Guard commander; Colonel Robert Karton, Great Lakes Region commander; Cadet Senior Master Sergeant David Ama; Cadet Master Sergeant Alex Roberts, alternate.